

175 fitto, levied upon each ass by the petty chiefs on the road is very consider-
 437 able. From 5,000 to 6,000 guro, or kola nuts, constitute an assload.

435 Selga, the market place for this important article, being, it appears, a
 145 most miserable town, where even water is very scarce and can only be
 136 purchased at an exorbitant price, the merchants always manage to make
 their stay here as short as possible, awaiting the proper season in Yendi, a
 town said to be as large as Timbuktu, or in Kulfela, the great market place
 of Mosi; and they are especially obliged to wait in case they arrive at the
 • beginning of the rainy season, there being no kola nuts before the latter
 part of the Kharif. The price of this nut in Timbuktu varies from 20 to
 123 100 shells each, and it always constitutes a luxury; so that, even on great
 festivals, alms consisting of this article are distributed by the rich people
 of the town. (Barth 1859 : II, 364)

175 The other data we have on prices paid for goods come from the
 • 43 period between 1890 and 1910, at which time French francs had been
 introduced. At this time the official value of one franc was 1,000
 cowries. Around 1904, a trader paid about 50 francs or 50,000 cowries
 for a head of cattle in Mossi country and sold it for about double the
 price at Salaga. With the proceeds of this transaction he bought kola
 nuts at the rate of one franc or 100 cowries per hundred. Thus with
 the sale of one cow a trader could obtain 10,000 kolas, these being
 valued at about 500 francs or 500,000 cowries in Mossi country and
 at 20 or 200 cowries each at Sarfere and Timbuktu (Marc 1909 : 173-
 4). At Timbuktu about this same period, 1895, traders could buy salt
 at about 30 francs for a slab weighing between 60 and 100 pounds
 and sell it for 45 francs at Sarafere, for 60 francs at Djenne, for between
 70 and 80 francs at San, and "thus progressively more until they
 reached Mossi country" (Dubois 1899 : 276). In 1910, Mossi traders
 bought cattle for about 40 to 100 francs, horses for about 90 francs,
 donkeys for 25 francs, and so on, and sold these animals in Salaga for
 three times the prices. There they bought kolas at 2 Fr. 50 per
 thousand, and sold them at 20 per thousand at Leo on the Mossi
 border, 35 francs per thousand at Wagadougou, 50 francs at Wahi-
 gouya, 60 francs at Saravere, and 100 francs per thousand at Tim-
 buktu. Here these traders bought bars of salt weighing about 75
 pounds for between 10 and 12 francs a piece, and sold them for
 between 40 to 60 francs at Wähigouya, and for from 80 to 100 francs
 a piece at Dedougou and points as far down as Wagadougou (Tauxier
 1917 : 221).

175 Not all the profit from this trade went into the pockets of the
 437 traders. We have the report of Binger that the chiefs, besides com-
 446 mandering the goods at less than one-hundredth their purchase
 651 price, received taxes on each caravan which passed through their
 territory.

9. Trade and Markets Among the Mossi People

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The migrants bring back all types of goods with them. According to Dufour: "Money as such is not brought back in very large proportion because manufactured products of the English colony (Gold Coast) cost less. Consequently, each year there is a great introduction of bicycles, sewing machines, fabrics". (Dufour 1956: 140). One might add to this list kerosene lamps, zinc buckets, all types of wearing apparel, and all manner of household goods. An inventory of the common trunk of two returning migrants revealed the following merchandise: two kerosene lamps, two bottles of kerosene, two burnoose of black serge trimmed with pink silk, one white burnoose, two blue shirts, two khaki shorts, two tubes of Thermogene (a medicated rub), eight women's headkerchiefs, two Moslem fezes, two hand mirrors, two jars of Vaseline petroleum jelly, two pairs of sandals, one black scarf, packs of camphor balls, and one bottle of perfume. These goods represent the migrant's work over one season, from October to the following April, in the cacao fields of Ghana. Other migrants return with more, but few return with less. The actual value of these goods has been estimated by Dufour at about one billion francs C.F.A. per year. The custom duties which the migrants pay amount to more than 150 million francs C.F.A. annually—the sum they actually paid into the treasury of the Haute Volta in 1953 (Rouch 1956: 139 ff.).

The migrants distribute to their relatives a good part of the goods they bring back, but a large proportion gets into the hands of other people either through the market or through more direct channels. Here is an example taken from my notes of March 24, 1956: "Trading in bicycles: Moussa gave Souliman a cow and an old bicycle for a new bicycle which Souliman had bought for 5,000 francs from a passing migrant. Souliman was trying to sell this same cycle for 6,250 francs, thus trying to make a profit of 1,250 francs just two or three days after he had bought it . . . Souliman slaughtered the cow which he received from Moussa and sold the beef to the local *restaurateur* at an additional profit. Souliman appears to be a sharp individual. He recently bought another bicycle for 5,000 francs from a migrant and resold it for 7,500 francs." This type of trading is not unusual, but the most typical articles resold by migrants in the local markets are lamps, worn shirts, shoes and other articles of clothing.

The growth of migration among Mossi men has led to a new type of commercial activity in the country. This is the selling of cooked food by the women to passing migrants. These women and young girls prepare food such as chicken, rice, millet balls, millet flour water and fried cakes which they bring to the principal thoroughfares to sell. Many of them arrive at the central village areas as early as four

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435 Cowries used to be chief medium of exchange in Mossi markets until the Europeans arrived. In addition the people bartered specific goods for other products. The prices of goods in these markets fluctuated from time to time. Prices were highest during the planting season when most goods were scarce, and lowest during the harvest periods, but we have little precise information about the prices of goods in the traditional markets. Even Barth's information is too sketchy to deal with. Our first reliable data come from Tauxier, whose writings cover the first decade (1896-1906) of the conquest. Using the then official rate of one franc equals 1,000 cowries, the prices of a few representative products were: horses, 40 to 100 francs (40,000 to 100,000 cowries); cattle, 30 to 40 francs (30,000 to 40,000 cowries); chickens, 250 cowries; guinea fowls, 250 to 300 cowries; hides, 3,000 cowries; pottery jars, 300 cowries; cotton trousers, 200 cowries; baskets, 1,500 cowries; and locust-bean balls, 100 cowries (Tauxier 1912 : 466 ff.).

Mangin, whose work covers the period from about 1910 to 1913, when the value of the franc was lowered to one franc equals 700 to 800 cowries, lists the approximate prices for the following goods: "Millet, 0.02 franc a kilogram; rice, 0.10 franc a kilogram; *fabirama*, 0.05 franc a kilogram; shea butter, 0.50 franc a kilogram; milk butter, 1.50 francs a kilogram; peanuts, 0.07 franc a kilogram; peanut oil, 0.50 franc a liter; one jar of ordinary millet beer, containing about six to eight liters, 0.20 franc; one jar of strong millet beer (*tose*), containing about six to eight liters, 0.40 franc; hydromel (*bese*), 0.15 franc a liter; chicken, 0.40 franc; average goat, 3 to 4 francs; large goat, 8 to 10 francs; average sheep, 3.50 francs for a ram, 4 francs, for an ewe; large sheep, 8 to 10 francs; donkey, 25 to 30 francs; horse, 150 francs; small cow (no hump), 50 francs; zebu cow, 70 francs; goat skin, 0.30 franc; cow skin, 1 franc; salt bars, from 1.50 to 2 francs a kilogram; kola nuts, from 0.03 to 0.10 franc apiece; one hoe, about 0.60 franc; cloth: strip of white cloth, 0.05 franc, about 0.60 franc a cubit; white blanket, 2 francs; indigo-dyed blanket, 3 francs; striped blanket, 4 francs; medium-sized shirt, 2.50 francs" (Mangin 1921 : 53). In dealing with these prices, a number of things should be kept in mind: first of all, these prices fluctuated very much during the year; secondly [437] they varied from region to region within the country; and thirdly, although these prices are given in francs during this period, it was still possible to use cowries to buy a large number of the products.

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● [43]
[42] Enormous changes have taken place in the Mossi economic and exchange systems over the decades following the studies of Tauxier and Mangin. Even before, but certainly after World War I, the French pressure on the Mossi to pay taxes in francs finally resulted